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# **Roadless Area Conservation**

## **National Forest System Lands in Idaho**

### **RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT**

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## Abstract

This report analyzes the potential effects on recreational opportunities of three alternatives to the management of Inventoried Roadless Areas within the state of Idaho. Each alternative provides a variation on the permissions and prohibitions on road construction or reconstruction; timber cutting, sale or removal; and mineral leases or rights. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) served as the basis for analyzing the effects of the management alternatives on recreational opportunities. To facilitate the analysis this report grouped various recreational opportunities into three categories - dispersed recreation, developed recreation and recreation special uses.

## Analysis

### METHODOLOGY:

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum provides a framework for stratifying and defining classes of outdoor recreation environments, activities, and experience opportunities. ROS is divided into 6 classes arranged along a continuum ranging from primitive to urban and include: Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban (USDA Forest Service 1986). The basic assumption underlying the ROS is that quality in outdoor recreation is best assured through a provision of measurable and diverse set of opportunities.

ROS classes Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized are most representative of the outdoor recreation environments, activities, and experience opportunities available in an Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs).

To facilitate analysis of the effects on recreational opportunities by the three management alternatives and their associated permissions and prohibitions, the recreational opportunities were segregated into three general categories; dispersed recreation, developed recreation, and recreation activities conducted under a special use permit.

*Dispersed recreation* is generally associated with activities that do not require constructed facilities, (except for trails). Non-motorized activities like hiking, biking, and backcountry skiing and motorized activities like snowmobiling and All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use best represent dispersed recreation.

Unlike dispersed recreation, *developed recreation* is generally associated with developed or modified settings generally in Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS classes and includes camping in constructed campgrounds, Off Highway Vehicles (OHV), and down hill skiing at a resort.

Special use permits generally authorize a broad range of commercial recreational activities both motorized and non-motorized in dispersed and developed settings.

Special use permits are issued for almost every type of outdoor recreational activities and can occur in every ROS class setting from Primitive to Urban.

The State of Idaho petition for Roadless Area Management (Idaho Petition) utilizes 5 different “management themes” for stratifying and defining IRA characteristics and the basic management activity permissions and prohibitions in each of the 281 roadless areas within Idaho (Table 1). Specifically these 5 themes span a management continuum that at one end of the spectrum includes Wild Land Recreation; a restrictive approach emphasizing passive management and a natural restoration approach, while on the other end is General Forest which is a relatively less restrictive approach allowing more active management. This continuum from most to least restrictive is similar to the Forest Service ROS system described above.

The petition’s theme system provides an outline or framework of basic management activities that may or may not occur within a given IRA. Unlike the ROS system the themes do not address the IRA recreation settings directly, just the probable management activities allowed, restricted or prohibited. Furthermore, the themes directly address and try to define management activities while the ROS system specifically addresses recreation activities and settings.

**Table 1. Theme activity management focus for the State of Idaho’s Petition.**

<b>Wild Land Recreation</b>	<b>Primitive</b>	<b>SAHTS<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Backcountry-Restoration</b>	<b>General Forest, Rangeland, Grassland</b>
1,378,600 Acres	1,656,300 Acres	68,600 Acres	5,246,100 Acres	609,500 Acres
Management Focus: These lands would show little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes would predominate. Only activities and management actions not deemed an irretrievable commitment of resources will be considered suitable uses.	Management Focus: These lands would remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities while allowing for limited forest health activities including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species and protecting ecological integrity. A variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities exist. Campsites may be visible at popular destinations and major trail heads or junctions. Recreation sites accommodate moderate use.	Management Focus: These areas would remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities in order to maintain their unique Tribal or historic characteristics. They would be managed the same as the primitive theme. They include Silver Creek (Pilot Knob) on the Nez Perce N.F., Nimiipuu and Lewis and Clark Trail on the Clearwater N.F., and the Mallard-Larkin on the Idaho Panhandle N.F.	Management Focus: These areas would retain their undeveloped character, while providing a variety of recreation opportunities, and allowing for limited forest health activities. These areas may include trailheads and recreational sites (developed and dispersed) depending on specific National Forest travel plans. These areas may be managed for summer and/or winter motorized recreation opportunities.	Management Focus: These areas would provide a variety of goods and services as well as a broad range of recreational opportunities (including motorized and non-motorized), and conservation of natural resources.
<sup>1</sup> SAHTS – Special area of Historic and Tribal Significance				

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**ASSUMPTIONS:**

The demand for Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized classes and dispersed recreation opportunities is increasing in an environment of diminishing supply (Cordell and others 1999).

The 9.3 million acres of IRA in Idaho are mainly found in the ROS classes of Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized classes.

The ROS Primitive and Semi-Primitive class characteristics or settings in these roadless areas are generally high and intact, which indicates a low level of previous landscape modification due to a lack of previous management activities.

Idaho's population growth and the associated residential development in the wildland-urban interface will continue to put pressure on public lands both roaded and IRA for fire protection, recreation experiences, and other uses.

Inventoried roadless areas are under continuous pressure to serve as the source (bank) for special designations (e.g. Wilderness) and the expansion of general forest management.

## **Affected Environment**

Many definitions of recreation exist, each emphasizing a slightly different aspect of an enjoyable pursuit. The basic premise is a pleasurable and constructive use of one's spare time. This sense of refreshment, relaxation, and the active pursuit of pleasure are realized through participation in recreational activities in one's unique preferred settings. The top five activities pursued on NFS lands are viewing natural features, general relaxation, hiking, viewing wildlife, and driving for pleasure (USDA Forest Service 2004). All of these are readily available in Idaho's IRA .

As shown in Table 2 Idaho's IRA supports a vast array of recreational activities ranging from hiking in the backcountry, snowmobiling on groomed trails, camping in developed sites, to hunting big game in remote areas. Each of these activities is often associated with specific ROS class settings. Therefore recreation resource managers must manage a wide variety of settings in order to provide opportunities for the widest range or the most enjoyable recreational experiences.

Inventoried roadless areas are essentially unmodified natural environments. Interaction between users is low and evidence of other users is minimal. These areas are managed in such a way that minimum on-site controls or restrictions are present. Motorized use is most often permitted but frequently limited to trails with few roads. They are remnants of vast landscapes substantially unmodified by high-intensity management activities (e.g., timber harvesting, mineral extraction, road construction, developed recreation). In the past roadless areas were viewed as a bank, holding lands in reserve for future resource development. Over time other allocations, uses, and designations have withdrawn lands from the bank, or changed the characteristics, creating a

situation where the remaining relatively unchanged landscapes have retained increasingly valuable roadless characteristics of the unmodified natural environments.

**Table 2. Recreation opportunity spectrum activity characterization.**

Primitive	Semi-primitive non-motorized	Semi-primitive motorized	Roaded natural	Rural	Urban
<b>Land based (includes aircraft):</b> Viewing scenery Hiking and walking Horseback riding Camping (all) Hunting (all) Nature study (all) Mountain Climbing General information	<b>Land based (includes aircraft):</b> Viewing scenery Automobile (off-road use) Motorcycles and scooters Specialized landcraft Aircraft (motorized) Hiking and walking Horseback riding Camping (all) Hunting (all) Nature study (all) Mountain climbing General information	<b>Land based (includes aircraft):</b> Viewing scenery Viewing activities Viewing works of humankind Automobile (inc. off-road use) Motorcycles and scooters Specialized landcraft Train and bus touring Aircraft (motorized) Aerial trams and lifts Hiking and walking Bicycling Horseback riding Camping (all) Organization camping (all) Picnicking Resort and commercial services Resort lodging Recreation cabin use Hunting (all) Nature studies (all) Mountain climbing Gathering forest products Interpretive services (all)	<b>Land based (includes aircraft):</b> Recreating cabin use Hunting (all) Nature studies (all) Mountain climbing Gathering forest products Interpretive Services (all) Team sports Individual sports Games and play  <b>Land based:</b> Viewing scenery Viewing activities Viewing works of humankind Automobile (inc. off-road use) Motorcycles and scooters Specialized land-craft Train and bus touring Aircraft (motorized) Aerial trams and lifts Aircraft (non-motorized) Hiking and walking Bicycling Horseback riding Camping (all) Organization camping (all) Picnicking Resort and commercial services Resort lodging		

Primitive	Semi-primitive non-motorized	Semi-primitive motorized	Roaded natural	Rural	Urban
<b>Water based:</b> Canoeing Sailing Other non-motorized watercraft Swimming Fishing (all)	<b>Water based:</b> Boating (powered) Canoeing Sailing Other watercraft Swimming Diving (skin or scuba) Fishing (all)	<b>Water based:</b> Tour boat and ferry Boat powered Canoeing Sailing Other watercraft Swimming and water play Diving (skin and scuba) Water skiing and water-sports Fishing (all)		<b>Water based:</b> Tour boat and ferry Boat powered Canoeing Sailing Other watercraft Swimming and water play Diving (skin and scuba) Water skiing and water sports Fishing	
<b>Snow and ice based:</b> Snow play Cross country skiing/snow shoeing	<b>Snow and ice based:</b> Ice and snow craft Skiing, downhill Snow play Cross-country skiing/snow shoeing	<b>Snow and ice based:</b> Ice and snow craft Ice skating Sledding and tobogganing Downhill skiing Snow play Cross-country skiing/snow shoeing		<b>Snow and ice based:</b> Ice and snow craft Ice skating Sledding and tobogganing Downhill skiing Snow play Cross-country skiing /snow shoeing	

(ROS book, USDA Forest Service 1986)

IRAs are characterized mainly by Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS classes. Of the 9.3 million acres of inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands in Idaho, a relatively small amount, less than 5% now contain roads, recreation sites, and other facilities causing, in some cases, a shift to the more developed end of the ROS.

## DISPERSED RECREATION

Much of the dispersed recreational value of these IRA lands lies in their unique Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized recreation opportunities. They provide settings for dispersed recreational activities that are prohibited in designated Wilderness Areas and not readily available in developed or modified settings with system roads. For example, Wilderness Areas prohibit, with few exceptions, mechanized and motorized uses like off highway vehicles (OHV), mountain bikes, and snowmobiles. Wheelchair or handicapped access is very limited. IRAs generally have a low level of human induced change. However, some IRAs have had extensive use including cattle grazing, OHVs, timber sales, and mining; therefore these roadless areas provide a different type of dispersed recreation.

The top five activities pursued on NFS lands are viewing natural features, general relaxation, hiking, viewing wildlife, and driving for pleasure (USDA Forest Service 2004). Four of the top five activities are generally associated with dispersed recreation.

Idaho IRAs provide some of the most productive fishing and hunting opportunities in the United States (Curley and Stouder 2004). They also provide quality and critical habitat for, Chinook salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout, popular recreational fishing species. The highest success rates for both deer and elk hunters state wide (Curley and Stouder 2004 and Idaho Department of Fish and Game maps) can be found in IRAs. While hunting and fishing can occur in areas managed for ROS classes on the more developed end of the spectrum, they typically provide a much different setting and experiences and in many cases result in a smaller success. Inventoried roadless areas also provide outstanding opportunities for other dispersed recreation activities, such as hiking, camping, horseback riding, picnicking, wildlife viewing, cross-country skiing, and canoeing.

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## DEVELOPED RECREATION

Even though the majority of NFS lands are available for developed recreation, demand for new opportunities is increasing (Cordell and others 1999). Idaho projects an estimated growth at 52.2% from 2001 to 2030. Idaho will continue to be one of the nation's fastest growing states and a major contributor to that growth will be people over the age of 64 (Idaho Commerce and Labor, press release 2005). This general increase in total population and individuals over 64 years will place a greater demand on developed recreation. The largest age group of forest recreationalists nationwide is 40-49 years (USDA Forest Service 2004). Camping and picnicking at developed sites, driving for pleasure, and visiting interpretive sites and visitor centers are examples of activities associated with the developed end of the ROS. The more developed ROS classes often involves a greater social interaction with other people, higher levels of managerial control, and more evidence of human activity, (Tables 3 and 4). The settings and evidence of human activities are described in Table 4. Traditionally, expansion of these developed recreation opportunities would occur into roadless areas, ultimately shifting the ROS classes from Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized to Roaded Natural or Rural. This shift reduces the amount of ROS class Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings and increases the value of the remaining remote primitive settings generally associated with roadless areas.

A popular road-based recreation activity in Idaho is driving for pleasure. Roads in the IRA act as an artery providing access for all types of recreation activities. The majority of the roads in IRA were originally constructed for other purposes such as access for timber or mining. These roads once constructed then provided access for recreationalists. Roaded portions of an IRA are often characterized by Semi-Primitive Motorized settings featuring large contiguous (greater than 2,500 acres, Table 5) natural appearing landscapes and other attributes similar to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized areas, yet allow motorized activities. These motorized IRA areas have many



Wilderness-like attributes and settings yet often allow existing road or OHV travel and other mechanized uses. Access is greatly enhanced for persons with disabilities and Idaho's aging population in the Semi-Primitive Motorized settings.

**Table 3. Recreation opportunity spectrum social setting criteria.**

Primitive	Semi-primitive non-motorized	Semi-primitive motorized	Roaded natural	Rural	Urban
Usually less than 6 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 3 parties visible at campsite.	Usually 6-15 parties per day encountered on trails and 6 or less visible at campsites.	Low to moderate contact frequency. <sup>a</sup>	Frequency of contact is Moderate to High on roads: Low to Moderate on trails and away from roads. <sup>a</sup>	Frequency of contact is Moderate to High in developed sites, on roads and trails, and water surfaces; Moderate away from developed sites. <sup>a</sup>	Large numbers of users onsite and in nearby areas.

<sup>a</sup> Specific numbers must be developed to meet regional or local conditions.  
(USDA Forest Service 1986)

**Table 4. Recreation opportunity spectrum evidence of human criteria.**

Primitive	Semi-primitive non-motorized	Semi-primitive motorized	Roaded natural	Rural	Urban
Setting is essentially an unmodified natural environment. Evidence of humans would be unnoticed by an observer wandering through the area. Evidence of trails is acceptable, but should not exceed standard to carry expected use. Structures are extremely rare.	Natural <sup>a</sup> setting may have subtle modifications that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. Little or no evidence of primitive roads and the motorized use of trails and primitive roads. Structures are rare and isolated.	Natural <sup>a</sup> setting may have moderately dominant alternations but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area. Strong evidence of primitive roads and the motorized use of trails and primitive roads. Structures are rare and isolated.	Natural <sup>a</sup> setting may have modifications which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However from sensitive <sup>b</sup> travel routes and use areas these alternations would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. There is strong evidence of designed roads and or highways. Structures are generally scattered, remaining visually subordinate or unnoticed to the sensitive <sup>b</sup> travel route observer. Structures may include power lines, micro-wave installations, etc.	Natural <sup>a</sup> setting is culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the sensitive <sup>b</sup> travel route observer. May include pastoral, agricultural, intensively managed wildland resource landscapes, or utility corridors. Pedestrian or other slow moving observers are constantly within view of culturally changed landscape. There is strong evidence of designed roads and or highways. Structures are readily apparent and may range from scattered to small dominant clusters including power lines, microwave installations, local ski areas, minor resorts and recreation sites.	Setting is strongly structure dominated. Natural or natural-appearing elements may play an important role but be visually subordinate. Pedestrian and other slow moving observers are constantly within view of artificial enclosure of spaces. There is strong evidence of designed roads and or highways and streets. Structures and structure complexes are dominant, and may include major resorts and marinas, national and regional ski areas, towns, industrial sites, condominiums or second home developments.

(USDA Forest Service 1986)

Table 5. Recreation opportunity spectrum size criteria.

Primitive	Semi-primitive non-motorized	Semi-primitive motorized	Roaded natural	Rural	Urban
5,000 acres <sup>a</sup>	2,500 acres <sup>b</sup>	2,500 acres	No size criteria.	No size criteria.	No size criteria.

<sup>a</sup> May be smaller if contiguous to Semi-primitive Non-motorized Class.

<sup>b</sup> May be smaller if contiguous to Primitive Class.

(ROS book USDA Forest Service 1986)

## RECREATION SPECIAL USES

### Outfitters and Guides

Frequently visitors to National Forests turn to others to facilitate their recreation experience. This may come in the form of lodging, rental equipment, or guiding services. Recreation special use permits are employed by Forest Service managers to authorize others to provide these desired services. Permits form a legally binding relationship between the Forest Service and other entities, primarily from the private sector.

Idaho outfitters and guides provide activities such as sightseeing, hunting, fishing, and rafting. Many of these activities or recreation opportunities are authorized by special use permits and occur in roadless areas. Rivers within Idaho's roadless areas provide high quality white water rafting. Outfitters and guides help visitors enjoy high quality experiences as an extension of the Forest Service's mission. Even though they provide a small percentage of the total recreation visitor days on National Forests, they benefit the States economy, especially in communities where outfitters and guides are based.

Currently, there are 430 outfitter and guide special use authorizations (USDA Forest Service 2006) and it is reasonable to assume that as Idaho's population grows and ages the demand for these guided experiences will also continue to increase. Many people are capable of total self-sufficiency in conducting their activity, while others often want or need assistance to experience the outdoors either for their convenience and/or to help insure their safety. Furthermore, people with disabilities, first-time visitors and visitors from out of state often choose outfitters and guides to gain access to opportunities, experiences, and settings that they would otherwise be unavailable to them.

Outfitting and guiding activities in inventoried roadless areas usually provide recreation opportunities for an unconfined type of outdoor recreation experience, free of the common urban distractions. In areas managed as Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, opportunities such as hiking, boating, caving, mountaineering, hunting, horseback riding, fishing, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, are offered. Areas managed as Semi-Primitive Motorized offer additional opportunities, such as

motorized rafting and boating, snowmobiling, OHV driving (motorcycle, ATV, or 4x4), and aircraft transport to remote areas.

The need for a particular type of special use authorization is determined in the Land Management Plan or by user demand. For many communities adjacent to public lands, recreation opportunities provide the potential to increase and diversify local economies. Chambers of Commerce, visitor bureaus, and businesses advertise these areas as providing a wide range of ROS settings for recreationalists. The growth and use of the Internet provides current information to everyone about these once remote recreation areas and the opportunities they provide.

## **Ski Resorts**

The primary developed recreational use requiring an authorization on National Forest Lands are ski resorts. There are 134 resorts operating on National Forest Lands nationally receiving an estimated 30 million plus skier visitors per year (National Ski Area Association, 2004). There are 18 ski resorts in Idaho, with nine occurring on Idaho national forests. These nine resorts receive an estimated 1.3 million ski visits (4 percent).

Ski areas provide an important developed recreation experience on National Forest lands. During the previous 2005/2006 season, national skier/snowboarder visits hit an all-time record of 58.8 million visits, up 3.3 percent from the previous season and up 2 percent from the previous record set in 2002/03 (RRC Associates 2006). With the population growth in many of the key western ski states, as well as overall income growth, the rising ski area visitor trend is projected to continue into the foreseeable future. The settings, experience, and activities usually associated with ski areas are more in line with the developed end of the ROS. Much of the National Forest land adjacent to ski areas in Idaho is Roadless and falls into the Semi-Primitive Non-motorized, or Semi-Primitive Motorized, ROS classes. This means expansion of ski areas can directly impact the adjacent national forest lands roadless characteristics and move these areas ROS class to the more developed end of the spectrum. Ski area expansions can also provide positive economic effects on the surrounding area while at the same time changing the areas recreational experiences. Summer use in and around ski resorts is also growing, this may also push the ROS class to the more developed end of the spectrum.

## Alternative Descriptions

### ALTERNATIVE 1. THE 2001 ROADLESS RULE

This alternative represents an inventoried roadless area management regime guided by the direction provided in the 2001 Roadless Rule (USDA Forest Service 2001). The purpose of the 2001 Roadless Rule was to ensure that inventoried roadless areas sustain their values for this and future generations. By sustaining these values a continuous flow of benefits associated with healthy watersheds and ecosystems is provided.

The 2001 Rule prohibits road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas except as provided in seven exceptions. These exceptions allow road construction or reconstruction to: (1) protect health and safety in cases of imminent threat of flood fire, or other catastrophic event; (2) in response to CERCLA; (3) for reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty; (4) to prevent irreparable resource damage; (5) road safety; (6) Federal Aid Highway project; (7) continuation, extension, or renewal of a mineral lease.

The 2001 Rule prohibits timber cutting, sale or removal except as provided in four exceptions. These exceptions allow timber cutting, sale or removal of generally small diameter timber when done for one of the following reasons, and it is done to maintain or improve one or more of the roadless characteristics. Exceptions include: (1a) to improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat; (1b) to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects, that would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period. Timber cutting, sale or removal is also allowed (2) when it is incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited; (3) for personal or administrative use; and (4) roadless characteristics have been substantially altered in a portion of the roadless area due to the construction of an authorized road and subsequent timber harvest.

Road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting activities were identified as having the greatest likelihood of altering and fragmenting landscapes, resulting in immediate, long-term loss of roadless area values and characteristics. This direction was the product of a national process that established management direction at the national level with limited focus on state or local issues.

The 2001 Rule does not address mineral resources. It permits road construction/reconstruction to reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty; or for the continuation, extension, or renewal of a mineral lease.

The 2001 Rule is similar to the Backcountry theme in the Idaho State Petition and applies equally to all 9.3 million acres of inventoried roadless areas in Idaho.

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## ALTERNATIVE 2. EXISTING FOREST PLANS

This alternative represents an inventoried roadless area management regime guided by each forest's land and resource management plan. Individually each forest's plan is unique but collectively the plans provide a wide spectrum of management styles from wildland recreation to intensive management. Overall, as forests have revised their plans, the trend has been to move more roadless areas into management prescriptions that conserve roadless area characteristics. When developing their plans, each forest, or group of forests, worked with the public to develop management direction for their Inventoried Roadless Areas.

Five National Forests in Idaho have revised their Plans since 1999, Targhee (1999), Caribou (2003), Boise (2003), Sawtooth (2003), and Payette (2003). The remaining five National Forests in Idaho are in the process of revisions and have plans of the following vintages: Challis (1987), Salmon (1987), Nez Perce (1988), Clearwater (1988), Idaho Panhandle (1987).

Generally, forest plans allow or limit an array of activities in roadless areas. The following describes how forest plans would generally crosswalk the Idaho State Petition.

Wild Land Recreation: These are areas recommended for wilderness in existing plans; therefore limited activities are allowed. No road construction, reconstruction or timber cutting is allowed except for valid existing rights, or where incidental to other activities (trail construction). Approximately 1,320,800 acres are proposed wilderness in existing plans.

Primitive: These are areas generally managed for non-motorized backcountry recreation. No road construction is usually allowed except to access valid existing rights or minerals (locatable, leaseable and saleable). Timber cutting may be done on a very limited basis, and usually in response to a threat (i.e. insect and disease, windstorms, salvage, etc). Approximately 2,131,400 acres in the existing plans would be managed in a similar manner as the primitive theme in the State Petition.

Backcountry: These are areas generally managed for other resource benefits, other than timber production, such as wildlife or recreation. Road construction/reconstruction is allowed, but generally includes some restrictions such as road closures, use of temporary roads, etc. Timber cutting is also allowed, again generally to a lesser extent than would be allowed in general forest, as it is done for other resource benefits. About 4,244,500 acres in the existing plans would be managed in a similar manner as the Backcountry theme in the State Petition.

General forest: These are areas managed for timber production, or where intensive forest management would be expected, including associated road construction/reconstruction. About 1,262,400 acres in the existing plans would be managed in a similar manner as the General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland theme in the State Petition.

Mineral resources are addressed in a variety of ways under existing plans.

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**ALTERNATIVE 3. IDAHO ROADLESS PETITION (PROPOSED RULE)**

The petition represents a strategy for the conservation and management of Inventoried Roadless Areas within the State of Idaho. It takes into account state and local situations and unique resource management challenges while recognizing and integrating the national interest in maintaining roadless characteristics.

Building off each forest's existing or proposed land and resource management plan, the petition categorizes individual inventoried roadless areas into five broad themes. The petition addresses activities related to road construction/reconstruction, timber cutting and mineral materials, and identifies when and where such activities are precluded or are permitted. As with the 2001 Rule, road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting activities were identified as having the greatest likelihood of altering landscapes, resulting in immediate change in roadless area values and characteristics. The petition also addresses mineral materials because of their potential association with roads and their potential effects on roadless characteristics.

The laws governing disposal of federal minerals located on National Forest System lands are complex. Responsibility for management of these resources is often shared between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior. Federal minerals are divided into three categories with different legal authorities, responsibilities and controls applying in each instance. The three basic categories are: locatable, saleable, and leaseable minerals.

The Idaho Roadless Petition, as well as the 2001 Rule, does not address locatable minerals because the development of locatable minerals is subject to the General Mining Law of 1872. The petition provides additional direction regarding common variety minerals which are the sole discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Similar to the 2001 Rule, the Idaho Roadless Petition would not seek to retroactively restrict any existing authorizations; however, the proposed rule would establish limitations on future discretion available to Forest Service line officers. It does not seek to impose restrictions on decisions that Congress has allocated to the Department of the Interior nor does the proposed rule effect or seek a withdrawal of the mineral estate as such matters are subject to a separate statutory process established in FLPMA.

The petition does not address grazing, travel management, or wildland fire use. Management direction related to those activities would be regulated by existing analysis processes (e.g. travel planning, forest plans).

Wild Land recreation: Wild Land Recreation areas show little evidence of historical or human use. Natural processes are predominant. People visiting can find outstanding opportunities for recreation including; exploration, solitude, risks and challenges. These areas have been recommended as proposed wilderness in current and proposed forest plans.



The intent is to manage these areas and to protect the wilderness characteristics and primitive recreation opportunities if or until Congress exercises its authority pursuant to the Wilderness Act to formally designate the area "Wilderness". Approximately 1,378,600 acres have been identified as Wild Land Recreation.

Road construction and reconstruction are prohibited except if it is provided for by statute or treaty, or it is needed pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights.

The Forest Service would not recommend, authorize or consent to surface occupancy, road construction or reconstruction associated with mineral leases. The sale of common variety minerals is also prohibited.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal is prohibited except for personal or administrative use; or where incidental to other management actions (such as trail clearing).

Primitive: These areas generally reflect the primitive character and provide primitive recreation opportunities, solitude, risks and challenges. There is minimal evidence of historical or human use, they appear natural and undisturbed. They generally do not reflect the same level of outstanding characteristics as those identified in the Wild Land recreation theme.

The intent is to manage these areas to protect and maintain both the primitive character and accompanying primitive recreation opportunities. Approximately 1,656,300 acres have been identified as primitive.

Road construction and reconstruction are prohibited except if it is provided for by statute or treaty; or it is needed pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights.

The Forest Service would not recommend, authorize or consent to surface occupancy, associated with new mineral leases. The sale of common variety minerals is also prohibited.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal is prohibited except for personal or administrative use; or where incidental to other management actions (trail clearing); or unless existing roads or aerial systems are used and the activity is needed to: (1) improve threatened, endangered, proposed or sensitive species habitat; and (2) to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects. Timber cutting would maintain or improve one or more of the roadless characteristics and would be done to maintain the primitive character. Timber cutting for the above exceptions is anticipated to be very infrequent in primitive areas.

Special areas of historic or tribal significance: These areas exhibit important tribal or historical significant features. Three areas have been identified, Pilot Knob on the Nez Perce National Forest; Nimiipuu and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trails on the Clearwater National Forest; and the Pioneer area on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest.

The intent is to manage these areas to preserve the inherent historic or tribal significance of that area; therefore they are to be managed the same as the primitive theme; except the allowance for geothermal and phosphate leasing would be precluded.

Approximately 68,600 acres have been identified as special areas of historical or tribal significance.

Backcountry: In areas identified as backcountry, the evidence of human use may or may not be present. Generally, few constructed features exist with the exception of trails and lookouts. These areas may show some evidence of timber cutting, but generally the roadless character has been maintained.

The backcountry theme would be managed to retain the undeveloped character while providing a variety of recreation opportunities and allowing for limited forest health activities including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species and maintaining or restoring ecosystem composition. Approximately 5,246,100 acres have been identified as backcountry.

Similar to the 2001 Rule, road construction and reconstruction are allowed: (1) to protect health and safety in cases of significant risk or imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event, or to facilitate forest health activities permitted under the timber cutting exception; (2) in response to CERCLA; (3) for reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty; (4) to prevent irreparable resource damage; (5) provide road safety; (6) in response to a Federal Aid Highway project; (7) in conjunction with the continuation, extension, or renewal of a mineral lease. The Idaho Petition clarifies imminent threat as actions necessary to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic and unwanted wildland fire effects.

The Forest Service would not recommend, authorize, or consent to road construction or reconstruction associated with mineral leases, except the leasing of phosphate materials pursuant to the Mineral Leasing Act. Leasing instruments that allow surface use or occupancy that do not require road construction or reconstruction are permissible. In addition, the sale of common variety minerals would be allowed in Backcountry if they are incidental to permitted activity.

The use of temporary roads is encouraged for any purpose.

Like the 2001 Rule, timber cutting, sale, or removal is allowed if the activity maintains or improves one or more of the roadless characteristics and is done: (1) to improve threatened, endangered, proposed or sensitive species habitat; (2) to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects; or (3) for personal or administrative use; or (4) is incidental to another management activity (trail clearing).

General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland: These areas include locations that may display high levels of human use including roads, facilities, mineral exploration/extraction, grazing and evidence of tree cutting. These areas encompass a



broad range of vegetative types and include forest, grassland and rangeland or a combination thereof.

General forest areas would be managed to provide a variety of goods and services and a broad range of recreational opportunities, while also ensuring adequate flexibility to maintain forest, rangeland and/or grassland health. However, these areas are likely to still retain some of their roadless qualities. Approximately 609,500 acres have been identified as General Forest, Rangeland or Grassland.

Road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting is allowed. There would be no constraints on mineral activities except as addressed in existing or proposed forest plans.

Forest Plan special areas. These include special area designations under existing or proposed plans such as Research Natural Areas, recommended or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, Geological Special Interest Areas, etc. These areas would be managed according to existing or proposed forest plan direction or existing laws, or specific direction provided by statute by Congress.

General Note: Any road construction/reconstruction or timber cutting under any alternative would be designed based on applicable forest plan standards and guidelines (e.g. protection of riparian areas, habitat needs for species, etc).

## Environmental Consequences

Because of the statewide scale of this analysis recreation use data was not collected specifically for each inventoried roadless area. As a result estimates of effects and consequences based on current or future use cannot be made with an exact degree of precision. Comparison of the alternatives is based on known factors such as trends in recreation use and projected road construction numbers, what management activities are allowed and availability of roadless areas to meet the growing future demands, and conditions that may influence shifts in IRA recreation patterns.

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### DISPERSED RECREATION

The three alternatives are compared by their allowances and prohibitions, or their ability to maintain existing areas of IRA available for dispersed recreation opportunities. Alternatives that maintain greater amounts of NFS lands in a similar future roadless condition are rated high; conversely, those that maintain the fewest acres of NFS lands in a similar future roadless condition are rated low.

#### Alternative 1 – 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001 Roadless Rule)

An underlying assumption in Alternative 1 is that inventoried roadless areas, outside of Wilderness and other designated areas would be available for limited resource management activities. All 9.3 million acres of Idaho's IRA were treated equally regardless of their existing characteristics or settings. Alternative 1 placed a prohibition

on road construction and reconstruction unless one of seven specific circumstances was met. This road construction prohibition, environmental regulations and decreasing Forest Service budgets have reduced the amount of roads built in Idaho's IRA to a negligible amount. Timber cutting was allowed under five specific circumstances, but road construction for harvest was not allowed. About 15 miles of road are projected to be constructed/reconstructed over the foreseeable future (next 15 years). Roads are most likely to be constructed/reconstructed in areas previously roaded (Roaded Natural) or in SPM because these areas are generally the closest to the edge of boundary of roadless area, and because these ROS classes allow for motorized use. This level of disturbance would not measurably change the dispersed recreation opportunities in any given area.

The 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits timber cutting, with a few exceptions. Generally timber cutting would retain roadless characteristics and would be natural-appearing, especially after a couple of years when the vegetation has regrown. Timber cutting is projected to occur on about 1,500 acres over the next 15 years. This level of activity would not measurably alter roadless area characteristics, especially over time.

The 2001 Roadless Rule also prohibits road construction and reconstruction associated with new mineral and energy leases. About 13,400 acres of known phosphate deposits are currently not leased and would not be developed; road access would also not be provided for geothermal development. These areas would retain their roadless characteristics and provide dispersed recreation opportunities.

These prohibitions on active resource management in inventoried roadless areas would preserve the acres of land available for dispersed recreation opportunities in the Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS classes. Since these prohibitions apply equally to all of Idaho's IRAs, Alternative 1 has a relative high ranking for its ability to maintain the existing amount of dispersed recreation available in Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS classes.

## **Alternative 2 - Existing Forest Land and Resource Management Plans for National Forests in Idaho.**

This alternative represents an inventoried roadless area management regime guided by each forest's land and resource management plan. Individually, each forest's plan is unique, but collectively the plans provide a wide spectrum of management from wildland recreation to intensive management.

Under Existing Plans road construction/reconstruction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral activities are generally not permitted on about 3.45 million acres of IRAs. These areas include management prescriptions similar to the Wild Land Recreation and Primitive themes and similar to forest plan special areas. Some timber cutting could occur in the Primitive theme but would likely not occur to a degree that would change the roadless character.

About 4.24 million acres are in management prescriptions similar to the Backcountry theme; generally some level of road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting is permitted. About 1.26 million acres are in management prescriptions similar to the General Forest theme. About 180 miles of road are projected to be constructed/reconstructed over the next 15 years, and timber cutting is projected to occur on 42,000 acres. Most of the activity would likely occur in the General Forest areas, with lesser amounts in Backcountry. This level of road construction/reconstruction could change dispersed recreation opportunity settings in some areas from a SPM to Roaded Natural; however, if roads are decommissioned after use then the change would be more temporary in nature. About a quarter of the roads (45 miles) are projected to be decommissioned.

Timber cutting on 42,000 acres over 15 years may change the natural appearance of some areas for a period of time until the area regenerates. The type of cutting would depend on the Existing Plan prescriptions and visual quality requirements. Based on this level of cutting, less than 1 percent of the roadless areas would be affected over 15 years. Dispersed recreation opportunities would not change as a result of timber cutting, but the feeling of remoteness and solitude may change for a period of time.

The Caribou Forest Plan permits leasing of the estimated 6,500 acres of known unleased phosphate deposits and/or other possible roadless areas that contain undiscovered phosphate resources. These known unleased phosphate deposits occur in six roadless areas (Dry Ridge, Huckleberry Basin, Meade Peak, Sage Creek, Schmid Peak, and Stump Creek) and would likely be developed over an extended period of time (50 years or more). In addition, there are 6,900 acres of unleased phosphate deposits on the Targhee portion of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest within the Bald Mountain, Bear Creek and Poker Creek roadless areas. An environmental analysis would have to be completed to determine how much of the 6,900 acres could actually be leased. It is likely to take an extremely long time to develop these sites (50 or more years), but if they are developed then dispersed recreation opportunities would not be available on these areas.

Existing Plans would permit road construction/reconstruction for geothermal development in some locations in management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and General Forest. It is unknown where and to what degree geothermal resources would be developed.<sup>1</sup> However, given nearly half of the IRAs in these themes have high to moderate potential for geothermal resources, it is likely that some development would eventually occur. Currently lease applications have been submitted for geothermal exploration on about 7,000 acres of the Peace Rock Roadless Area on the Boise National Forest and 33 acres of the West Panther Roadless Area on the Salmon National Forest. If fully developed, roads, transmission lines, and other facilities would likely be constructed changing the type of dispersed recreation opportunities of these

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<sup>1</sup> See Minerals Specialist Report for further information

roadless areas. Site-specific environmental analysis would be conducted prior to any geothermal exploration or development.

Hunting and fishing opportunities could be affected in locations where phosphate or geothermal development occurs because of the level of disturbance associated with these activities. Hunting and fishing opportunities likely would not change in areas where timber cutting and associated road construction occurs because of the dispersed nature of these activities, recovery of vegetative conditions, and use of temporary roads.

This alternative would receive a lower rating because of the potential reduction in its ability to maintain the existing supply of dispersed recreation within IRA's.

### **Alternative 3 – State of Idaho Petition.**

The petition builds off each forest's existing or proposed land and resource management plan. The petition categorizes individual inventoried roadless areas into five broad themes. The first three themes, Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, and Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance (about 3.1 million acres) are restrictive and provide strong measures to protect an IRA's Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS classes. Some timber cutting could occur in the Primitive theme but would likely not occur to a degree that would change the roadless character.

The fourth theme, Backcountry consists of approximately 5,246,100 acres. It is managed very much like Alternative 1, allowing very limited activities. The fifth theme, General Forest (609,500 acres) does allow management activities such as road construction/reconstruction. Cutting, selling, or removing timber is allowed if the activity maintains or improves one or more of the roadless characteristics. About 60 miles are projected to be constructed/reconstructed over the next 15 years, and timber cutting is projected to occur on 12,000 acres. Most of the activity would likely occur in the General Forest theme, with lesser amounts in Backcountry. This level of road construction/reconstruction could change dispersed recreation opportunity settings in some areas from a SPM to Roaded Natural; however, if roads are decommissioned after use then the change would be temporary in nature. About 75 percent of the roads (45 miles) are projected to be decommissioned (includes both temporary and permanent). The petition would require the use of temporary roads unless there is specific reason to warrant a permanent road.

Timber cutting on 12,000 acres over 15 years may change the natural appearance of areas for a period of time until the area regenerates. Under the petition, timber cutting would be done only for ecosystem restoration or fuels management, with the intent of focusing on what is left, not what is removed. Based on this level of cutting, less than a half of 1 percent of the roadless areas would be affected over 15 years. Dispersed recreation opportunities would not change as a result of timber cutting but the feeling of remoteness and solitude may change in some locations for a period of time.

There are 13,400 acres of known unleased phosphate deposits on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. About 12,100 acres (90 percent) are located within the Backcountry and General Forest themes. Under these themes road construction or reconstruction would be permissible to develop these phosphate deposits.

These deposits are located within nine roadless areas (Dry Ridge, Huckleberry Basin, Meade Peak, Sage Creek, Schmid Peak, and Stump Creek on the Caribou portion of the forest and Bald Mountain, Bear Creek, and Poker Creek on the Targhee portion of the forest) and could eventually be mined over an extended period of time (50 years or more years). When and if these sites are developed then dispersed recreation opportunities would be reduced in these areas.

About 1,300 acres of unleased phosphate deposits are in the Primitive theme. The Primitive theme prohibits road construction/reconstruction or surface occupancy for phosphates; therefore this area would likely not be developed (see Minerals section); and there would be no effect to dispersed recreation opportunities found in this area.

The petition would also permit road construction/reconstruction for geothermal development in the General Forest theme. About 7 percent of IRAs are in this theme, and about 4 percent could be developed based on slope restrictions. It is likely some of these areas would be developed over time; however, except for two pending lease applications there is no information about where or when the activity would occur. Development could only occur within the General Forest theme, which is designated only on the Boise, Caribou, Idaho Panhandle, Payette, Salmon, Sawtooth and Targhee National Forests. If fully developed, roads, transmission lines, and other facilities would likely be constructed, which would reduce dispersed recreation opportunities of the roadless areas affected. Site-specific environmental analysis would be conducted prior to any geothermal exploration or development. About 93 to 96 percent of the roadless areas would be restricted from exploration or development.

Currently lease applications have been submitted for geothermal exploration within 7,000 acres of the Peace Rock Roadless Area on the Boise National Forest and 33 acres of the West Panther Roadless Area on the Salmon National Forest. Both these areas are in the Backcountry or Primitive themes which prohibit road construction or reconstruction to access mineral resources; therefore, they would not be developed under the petition.<sup>2</sup> There would be no effect on dispersed recreation opportunities in these areas.

Hunting and fishing opportunities could be affected in locations where phosphate or geothermal development occurs because of the level of disturbance associated with these activities. Hunting and fishing opportunities likely would not change in areas where timber cutting and associated road construction occurs because of the dispersed nature of these activities, recovery of vegetative conditions, and use of temporary roads.

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<sup>2</sup> The Backcountry theme allows for surface occupancy, but development is unlikely to occur because of economic limitations and the availability of geothermal resources in other areas (see Minerals section).



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## DEVELOPED RECREATION

Most developed recreation use on NFS lands depends on permanent roads for access to developed sites. Increased recreation use of all types will increase demand for more roads and more developed sites. For example, a popular dispersed recreation area near a road may become a developed site to minimize environmental damage and manage the number of people; popular backcountry destination areas may require new trailheads; or as the NFS road system stabilizes, increased use may require reconstruction to a higher level of design. As Idaho's population grows demands for opportunities at the more developed end of ROS will also increase placing additional pressure on existing areas available for development or road based recreation opportunities.

Historically, developed recreation followed roads built for timber, fire, mining or other resource management activities. As use became heavy and demand for amenities increased, some areas became suitable for developed sites. This resulted in a wide dispersion of small to medium sized developed sites.

In the foreseeable future, recreation budgets are projected to remain low. As a consequence, the Forest Service is developing facility master plans that analyze the benefit and costs of managing each facility. The plans' recommendations are trending toward elimination of low-use camping sites and a focus on improvement and maintenance of existing, popular developed sites. Most of these sites are in the developed portions of national forests, near lakes and streams and accessed by roads. Any developed portions of IRAs would most likely have the roads obliterated or gated and would not lead to additional developed recreation opportunities.

### **Alternative 1 – 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001 Roadless Rule)**

Alternative 1 placed a national prohibition on all IRA road construction and reconstruction unless one of seven specific circumstances was met. Because the national prohibitions are applied to all the inventoried roadless areas, this alternative would prohibit access to existing or new developed recreation sites, unless they are associated with a special use permit issued prior to the rule. This alternative limits opportunities for new developed recreation within IRAs; however, there are no reasonably foreseeable developed recreation actions that would be affected at this time.

### **Alternative 2 - Existing Forest Land and Resource Management Plans for National Forests in Idaho.**

Alternative 2 would provide the most opportunity for developed and road based recreation to occur and expanded. Each forest's plan allows for site specific analysis to determine an area's future development level. There would be no national prohibitions in place to restrict continued development of inventoried roadless areas. Under Existing Plans, road construction/reconstruction are generally not permitted on about 3.45 million acres of IRAs. These areas include management prescriptions similar to the

Wild Land Recreation themes, and similar to some forest plan special areas. Some road construction/reconstruction to provide roaded access to developed recreation may be permitted in Primitive themes in certain situations.

Existing Plans generally permit road construction/reconstruction in management prescriptions similar to the Backcountry and General Forest themes. Existing Plans would permit roaded access for developed recreation in IRAs; however, there are no foreseeable proposals for developed recreation sites at this time. In addition, with agency budgets for facilities being reduced, it is unlikely that roads would be constructed or reconstructed to access these sites.

### **Alternative 3 – State of Idaho Petition.**

The petition was compiled from existing or proposed forest land and resource management plans. The petition categorizes individual inventoried roadless areas into five broad themes. Under the petition, road construction/reconstruction would not be permitted to provide roaded access for developed recreation on about 8.5 million acres of IRAs, unless the sites are associated with an existing special use permit. No roads could be constructed/reconstructed in the Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, SAHTS, and Backcountry themes for recreation development.

Road construction and reconstruction are permitted in the General Forest theme (0.6 million acres) to provide roaded access to developed recreation. Given no General Forest is located on the Challis, Clearwater, Nez Perce or Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, opportunities would be limited on these units. There are no reasonably foreseeable developed recreation actions that would be affected at this time.

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## **RECREATION SPECIAL USES**

All decisions regarding existing and future special use permits would be project-specific and require compliance with all environmental regulations. Activities undertaken pursuant to existing permits would be unaffected by this programmatic action. Recreational special use permits occur in every ROS class and setting found in NFS land. Processing and administering special use permits would be governed by forest plans.

Proposed recreation developments such as expansion of ski areas or recreation resorts into IRAs would be allowed to continue under existing Forest Service procedures if special use permits are in existence prior to the adoption of any direction and the proposed activities or expansion occur within the boundaries established by the special use authorization.

Minerals development associated with the existing Smokey Canyon phosphate mine on the Caribou portion of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest has the potential to remove 1,100 acres of SPM ROS class from all recreational opportunities until reclaimed; however, there are no anticipated effects on any special use activities associated with recreation providers. An additional 8,000 acres of existing phosphate lease areas within

six roadless areas (Dry Ridge, Huckleberry, Meade Peak, Sage Creek, Schmid Peak, and Stump Creek) could be developed over an extended period of time (50 or more years). All recreational opportunities would be foregone as these areas are developed.

### **2001 Roadless Rule (No Action)**

The 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting, with a few exceptions. Most roadless areas would retain their roadless characteristics and any foreseeable activity would have minimal effect on outfitter and guide services in roadless areas. Outfitting and guiding related to hunting and fishing would not be affected because there is no anticipated change to big game or fisheries.

In addition, the 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits road construction/reconstruction in a roadless area to provide roaded access to a ski area; therefore, there is no potential to develop or expand ski areas that require roaded access in IRAs. At this time, there are no foreseeable expansions or new developments that would be affected.

### **Alternative 2 - Existing Forest Land and Resource Management Plans for National Forests in Idaho.**

Under Existing Plans road construction/reconstruction are generally not permitted on about 3.45 million acres of IRAs. These areas include management prescriptions similar to the Wild Land Recreation and Primitive themes, and similar to forest plan special areas. These areas would retain their roadless characteristics and there would be little to no effect on existing outfitting and guiding services.

About 4.24 million acres are in management prescriptions similar to the Backcountry theme. Road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting are permissible in many situations. About 1.26 million acres are in management prescriptions similar to the General Forest theme. Road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting are permissible in these areas. About 180 miles of road are projected to be constructed/reconstructed over the next 15 years, and timber cutting is projected to occur on 42,000 acres. These activities could change recreational experiences but should not affect outfitting and guiding services or opportunities because of the dispersed nature of these activities, recovery of vegetative conditions, and use of temporary roads.

Management prescriptions similar to Backcountry generally would permit road construction/reconstruction to provide roaded access for new ski area development or expansion. Road construction/reconstruction is permissible to provide roaded access for new ski area development or expansion in management prescriptions similar to the General Forest theme (1.26 million acres). However, at this time there are no foreseeable ski area expansions or developments in IRAs.

### **Alternative 3 – State of Idaho Petition.**

Under the petition, road construction/reconstruction are generally not permissible on about 3.45 million acres of IRAs. These areas include the Wild Land Recreation,



Primitive, and Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance themes, as well as forest plan special areas. These areas would retain their roadless characteristics and there would be little to no effect on existing outfitting and guiding services.

About 5.25 million acres are in the Backcountry theme, where road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting would be permissible in limited situations. About 0.6 million acres are in the General Forest theme, where road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting would be permissible. About 60 miles are projected to be constructed/reconstructed over the next 15 years, and timber cutting is projected to occur on 12,000 acres. These activities could change recreational experiences but should not affect outfitting and guiding services and opportunities because of the dispersed nature of the activities, recovery of vegetation, and the emphasis on the use of temporary roads.

Road construction/reconstruction would be prohibited in the Backcountry theme for development or expansion of existing special use permits outside permit boundaries; therefore, this could limit ski areas expansion and development. However, there are no known foreseeable expansions or developments at this time.

Road construction/reconstruction would be permissible in the General Forest theme (609,500 acres). Ski area expansion and development could occur in these areas, although none has been identified as reasonably foreseeable at this time. Under the petition, no General Forest was designated on the Challis, Clearwater, Nez Perce, or Wallowa-Whitman National Forests; therefore, new ski area opportunities within an IRA that need roaded access would be precluded on these forests.

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## **CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ON RECREATION**

There are approximately 53 million acres of land in Idaho; about 60 percent are in federal ownership. A variety of recreational opportunities are provided on these lands. Conserving IRAs would have mixed effects on recreation activities. IRAs have traditionally been viewed as places where future developed recreation, such as resort development, may potentially expand. A prohibition on road construction and reconstruction in IRAs would maintain the current recreation land availability, while preventing road-based recreational developments. The effects on dispersed recreation opportunities are especially mixed. Currently, roadless areas are seen as important places where dispersed motorized and mechanized uses may sometimes occur. However, as motorized recreation expands into roadless areas, there are direct conflicts with other users who may be seeking quiet and solitude. Motorized and mechanized uses can also conflict with other resources including soil and water protection and plant and animal habitat quality. Maintaining a balance between competing uses in roadless areas has been increasingly difficult, as large areas available for dispersed recreation decline due to development.

Decisions made through travel planning could affect the amount of area available for motorized and non-motorized travel and indirectly affect dispersed recreation

opportunities. If roads cannot be constructed in IRAs to facilitate recreation opportunities then additional pressures could be placed outside roadless areas. However, as noted earlier, recreation budgets are declining and the Agency is beginning to review the recreation facility master planning to focus resources on the most appropriate recreation opportunities to meet changing public desires and demands.

Actions by other land management agencies can be important factors in affecting demand for recreation opportunities on IRAs. The National Park Service continues to develop management direction for snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park. If the amount of snowmobile use (generally associated with SPM ROS class) is reduced from its current level, additional pressure may be placed on the Forest Service to accommodate this displaced use on NFS lands. Other programmatic decisions are likely to have little to no additional cumulative effect on recreation resources.

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## Definitions

**Backcountry** – 1) The State of Idaho Petition descriptive theme (see table 1. for definition).

2) A generic term that refers to areas that are relatively unmodified and usually accessible only by foot, horse, watercraft, or Off Highway Vehicle (OHV).

**Carrying capacity** – A measure used to signify the optimum use that the area can accommodate without having unacceptable degradation of resources or undesirable social interaction, in accordance with specified standards usually found in the land and resource management plan.

**Developed recreation** – Activities that are consistent with the settings and experiences identified with the Roded Natural (RN), Rural (R), and Urban (U) classes of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. These activities are usually associated with an area that has been improved or developed for recreation, such as campgrounds and picnic areas, scenic overlooks and interpretive sites, or visitor centers and resorts.

**Dispersed recreation** – Activities usually associated with backcountry and trails and are consistent with the settings and experiences identified with Primitive (P), Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM), and Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) classes of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. Examples of these activities include hiking, snowmobiling, mountain biking, wilderness use, backpacking, horseback riding, and OHV use.

**Forest road or trail** – Any road or trail completely or partly within, or adjacent to, and serving the National Forest System and which is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources.

**Inventoried roadless area** – Undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that met the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act and that were inventoried during the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) process, subsequent assessments, or forest planning. These areas are identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps, contained in *Forest Service Roadless*

*Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2*, dated November 2000, which are held at the National headquarters office of the Forest Service.

**Motorized equipment** – Machines that use a motor, engine, or other nonliving power sources. This includes, but is not limited to, chain saws, aircraft, snowmobiles, generators, motorboats, and motor vehicles. It does not include small battery powered hand carried devices such as shavers, wristwatches, flashlights, cameras, stoves, or other similar small equipment.

**Off highway vehicle (OHV)** - A 4-wheeler, dirt bike, three wheeler or track mounted vehicle or snowmobile that's intended use is off road riding, these are most often not street legal vehicles.

**Primitive (P)** – A definition used in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to characterize an area that is essentially an unmodified natural environment of large size. Interaction between users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. The area is managed to be essentially free from evidence of human-induced restrictions and controls. Motorized use within the area is not permitted.

**Road** – A motor vehicle travelway over 50 inches wide, except those designated and managed as a trail. A road may be classified, unclassified, or temporary.

**Road based recreation** – Activities that are normally associated with classified roads and are consistent with the settings and experiences identified with Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM), Roaded Natural (RN), Rural (R), and Urban (U) classes of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. Examples of these activities include car camping and picnicking, gathering berries and firewood, driving for pleasure, wildlife viewing, and OHV use.

**Roaded Natural (RN)** – A definition used in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to characterize an area that has predominantly natural-appearing environments with moderate evidences of the sights and sounds of humans. Such evidences are usually in harmony with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be low to moderate, but evidence of other users is prevalent. Resource modification and practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for construction standards and facilities design.

**Roadless areas** – For the purposes of this EIS, a generic term that includes inventoried roadless area and unroaded areas.

**Roadless characteristics** – Roadless area characteristics include the following:

- Soil, water, and air
- Sources of public drinking water
- Diversity of plant and animal communities
- Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species, and for those species dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land

- Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized classes of recreation opportunities
- Reference landscapes
- Landscape character and scenic integrity
- Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites
- Other locally identified unique characteristics

**Rural (R)** – A definition used in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to characterize an area with a substantially modified natural environment. Sights and sounds of humans are readily evident, and the interaction between users is moderate to high. A considerable number of facilities are designed for use by large numbers of people. Facilities for intensified motorized use and parking are available.

**Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)** – A definition used in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to characterize an area that has a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment of moderate to large size. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use is permitted.

**Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)** – A definition used in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to characterize an area that has a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment of moderate to large size. Interaction between users is low, but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed in such a way that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present, but they are subtle. Motorized use is not permitted.

**Trail** – A pathway for travel by foot, stock, or trail vehicles.

**Urban (U)** – A definition used in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to characterize a substantially urbanized environment, although the background may have natural appearing elements. Affiliation with individuals and groups is prevalent, as is the convenience of sites and opportunities. Large numbers of users can be expected, both on-site and in nearby areas. Facilities for highly intensified motor vehicle use and parking are available. Regimentation and controls are obvious and numerous.

**Wilderness** – A designated area defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964 in the following way: A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which – (a) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially

unnoticeable; (b) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (c) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (d) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

**Wildland** – Land other than that dedicated for other uses such as agriculture, urban, mining, or parks.